

Docket Item #9 A-B
MASTER PLAN AMENDMENT#2005-0004
REZONING #2005-0006
DEVELOPMENT SITE PLAN #2005-0002
DIAMOND-SLATER'S LANE

Planning Commission Meeting
October 4, 2005

ISSUE: MPA#2005-0004 Consideration of a request for an amendment to the Master Plan to change the land use designation from CSL to RC.

REZ#2005-0006 Consideration of a request for an amendment to the zoning map to change the land use designation from CSL to RC (rezoning with proffers)

DSP#2005-0002 Consideration of a request to construct a 28 unit condominium building.

APPLICANT: Diamond Slaters, LLC
by Harry P. Hart, attorney

LOCATION: 800-820 Slater's Lane

ZONE: CSL/Commercial Service Low
RC/High Density Residential (Proposed)

CITY COUNCIL ACTION, OCTOBER 15, 2005: City Council approved the Planning Commission recommendation for the amendment to the master plan to change the land use designation of the site, to accept the consideration of the request for an amendment to the rezoning map to change the land use designation of the site, and consideration of a request to construct a 28 unit condominium building, with an amendment to condition #27, as submitted by the applicant in the letter dated October 14, 2005.

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION, OCTOBER 4, 2004:

MPA#2005-0004: On a motion by Mr Leibach, seconded by Mr. Jennings, the Planning Commission voted to recommend approval of the request to amend the Northeast chapter of the Master Plan, subject to the site plan proffer. The motion carried a vote of 6 to 0. Ms. Fossum was absent.

REZ#2005-0006: On a motion by Mr. Leibach, seconded by Mr Jennings, the Planning

Commission voted to recommend approval of the request to amend the Northeast chapter of the Master Plan, subject to the site plan proffer. The motion carried a vote of 6 to 0. Ms. Fossum was absent.

DSP#2005-0002: On a motion by Mr.Jennings, seconded by Mr Robinson, the Planning Commission voted to recommend approval of the request to amend the Northeast chapter of the Master Plan, subject to the site plan proffer, compliance with all applicable codes, ordinances, and staff recommendations, with amendments to Condition #8, and elimination of Condition # 9f. The motion carried a vote of 6 to 0. Ms. Fossum was absent.

Reason: The Planning Commission agreed with staff analysis and found the rezoning and Master Plan amendment request appropriate to the change of character in the area, and, found the proposed development proffered to the change request consistent with the context and use of the neighborhood.

Speakers:

Harry P. Hart, attorney for the applicant spoke in support of the applications.

Nicholas Panos, Resident, Old Town Crescent Home Owner Association Chairman, spoke in concern of the alley to the south being utilized by the proposed residential development, as well as the construction. Mr. Panos stated preference for an alternative access for the proposal, as well as for construction. Mr. Panos also expressed concern for the costs of maintenance of the alley.

Paul Hertel, Resident, Spoke in support of the proposal and the proposed architecture. Mr. Hertel also spoke in support of the closing of the curb cut to Slater's Lane.


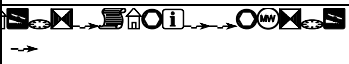
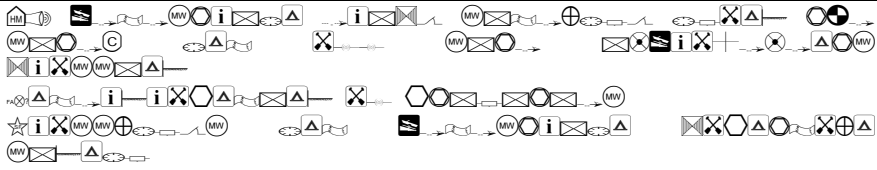
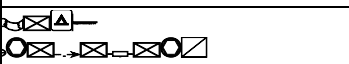
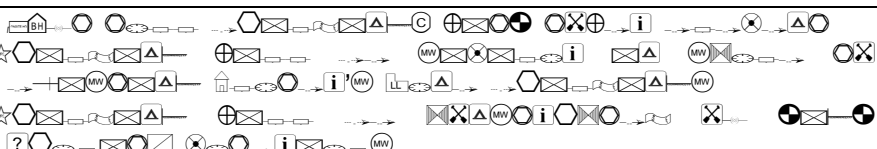

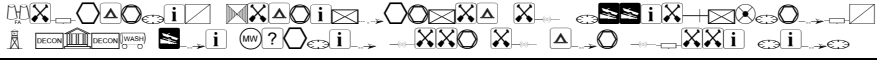



Larry Grossman, resident of Northeast area and representing Bike Walk Alexandria spoke in support of the proposal. Mr. Grossman also spoke in concern of the safety of pedestrian access along the sidewalk on the south side of Slater's Lane.

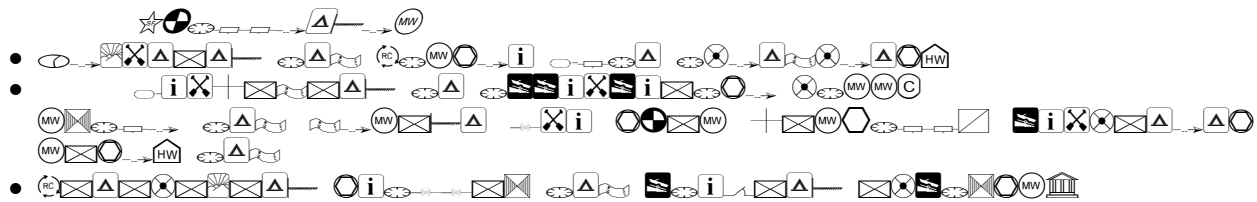
Mariella Posey, resident, 915 Second Street, Chairman, Northeast Citizen's Association, spoke in support of the proposal with the exception of the concern for open balconies on the north side of the building.

Fernando Alvarez, 731 Bernard Street, Spoke in support of the proposal

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I. IMPACT/BENEFIT:

IMPACT/BENEFIT	COMMENTS
Consistency with Strategic Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proposal represents redevelopment of a scale and character that is consistent with the Slater's Lane neighborhood and the City vision for the area The development provides publicly accessible open space with amenities The building orientation and wide sidewalks provide a pedestrian-oriented streetscape
Use	
	9,137 sq.ft. of open space/ 40.7 % Publicly accessible open space courtyard Street trees and landscaping
n	
	
	
	A Transit Incentive Program account to be funded annually at a rate of \$120 per occupied residential unit Goal of promoting transit and ridesharing and discouraging the use of single occupancy vehicles
	47 parking spaces are provided in the underground garage 7 spaces, (15%) are provided on-site at grade
	Incorporation of sustainable building technology to the equivalent of a LEED Silver -rating Proposal reduces the amount of impervious surface on the site by 9,137 sq. ft.



Opportunities

- Pedestrian and streetscape improvements;
- Affordable housing;
- Providing significant “green”-environmentally friendly and sustainable elements;
- High quality building design and materials;
- Ground-level open space, “openness”;
- Publically accessible open space;
- Underground parking; and
- Redevelopment of a remnant commercial-industrial use within a primarily residential neighborhood.

The proposed redevelopment of this commercial-industrial (Nordic Press) infill site will reinforce the emerging character of Slater's Lane as an urban street with high quality buildings, a mix of uses, pedestrian amenities and open space. The proposed residential use will be more compatible with the adjoining residential use to the east, south and west of the site than the existing use or many of the potential commercial use permitted by the current zoning.

Staff recommends approval of the rezoning, Master Plan amendment and site plan. The applicant has worked extensively with the City and community to make revisions to the plan, mass and scale, open space, streetscape and parking to bring forward a plan that proposes a use and scale that are compatible with the character of the neighborhood. In addition, the proposal provides considerable public benefit which include:

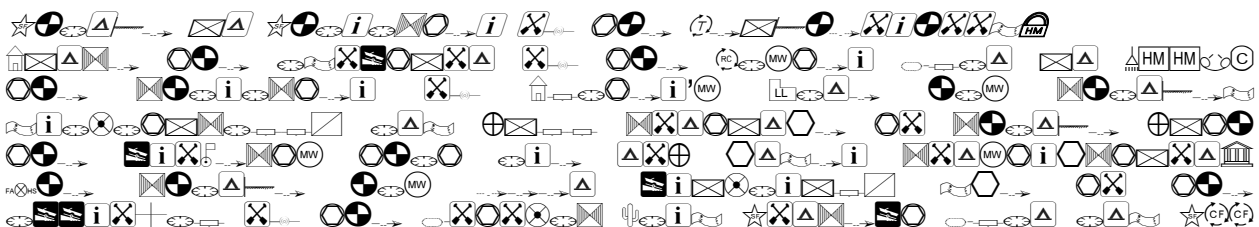
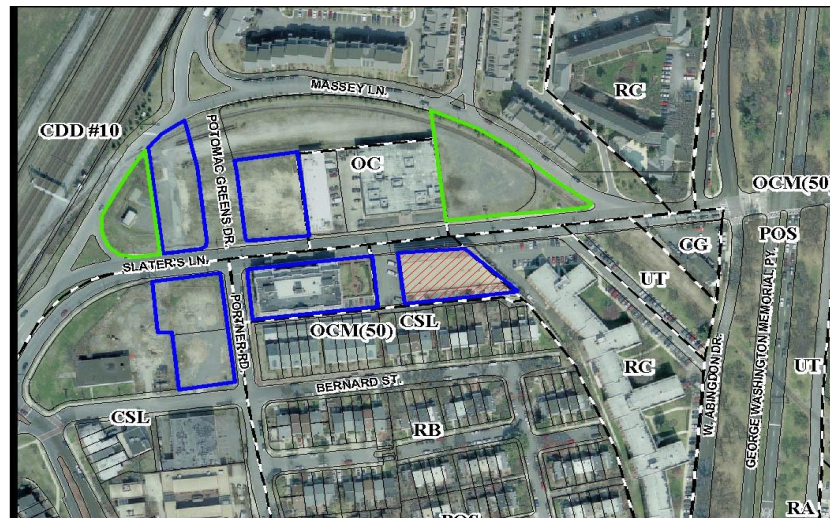
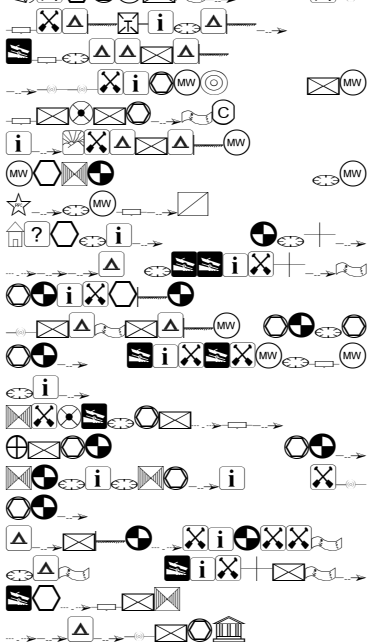
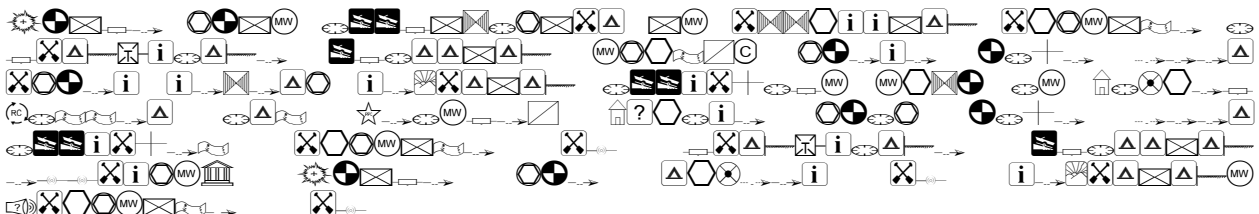
- The first large-scale residential development to provide a building and site elements that will enable a “green” building to achieve a silver LEED certification;
- A voluntary offer of \$125,000 for an on-site affordable unit or cash equivalent;
- High quality building design and materials;
- Locating the overhead utilities on Slater's Lane below grade;
- Pedestrian, sidewalk and landscaping improvements on Slater's Lane, including off-site improvements;
- A publically accessible open space and courtyard on the eastern portion of the site;

- and
- Underground parking.

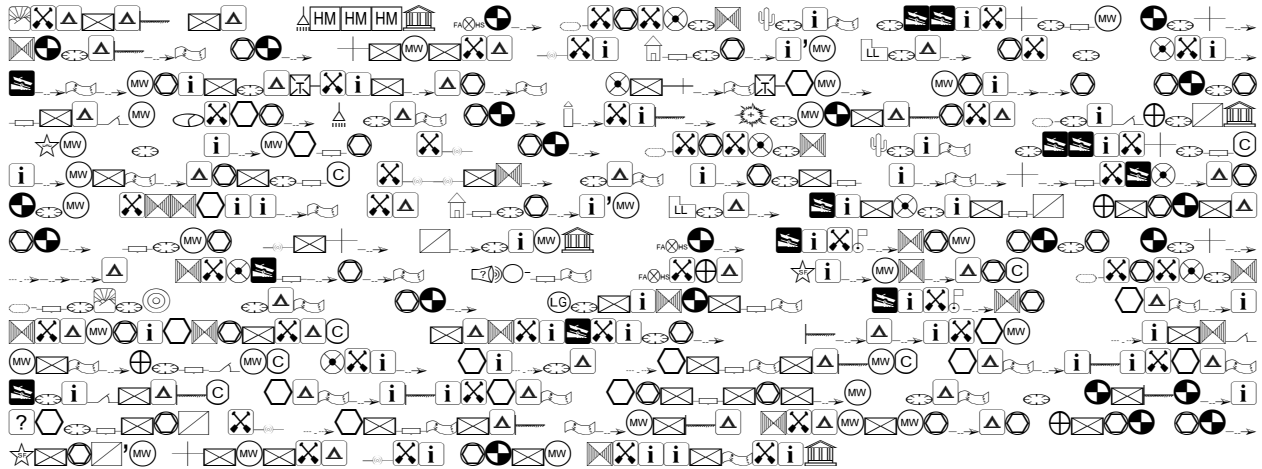
• Rezoning - Master Plan Amendment:

It has been the general practice of the City that rezonings and Master Plan amendments should:

- occur generally as part of a long-range planning effort ex. Eisenhower East;
- consider any significant change in the character of the neighborhood;
- be compatible with the character of the neighborhood;
- provide a clear public benefit; and
- be consistent with City policies.



Diamond-Slater's Lane

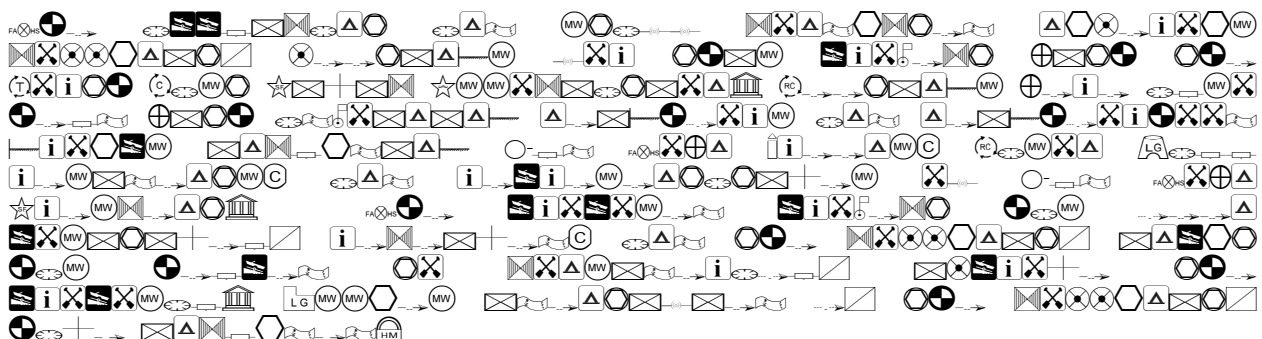


• Compatibility with the Character of the Neighborhood:

With a prominent location on Slater's Lane that will be visible from the Parkway, larger buildings on Slater's Lane and the smaller scale buildings to the south, the site is an important transition point among different scale buildings. The applicant has worked with the City and community to revise the proposal to achieve a site plan and building mass with extensive architectural detailing that respects the context and meets the challenges of a complex site. The site layout, scale, building massing and open space were influenced by the following:

- The need to provide a “gateway” element for this corridor near the Parkway;
- The scale and character of Slater's Lane;
- Provision of publically accessible and visible ground-level open space on the eastern portion of the site that would visually connect to the future parkland on the north side of Slater's Lane; and
- Provision of a considerable setback for the townhouses abutting to the south.

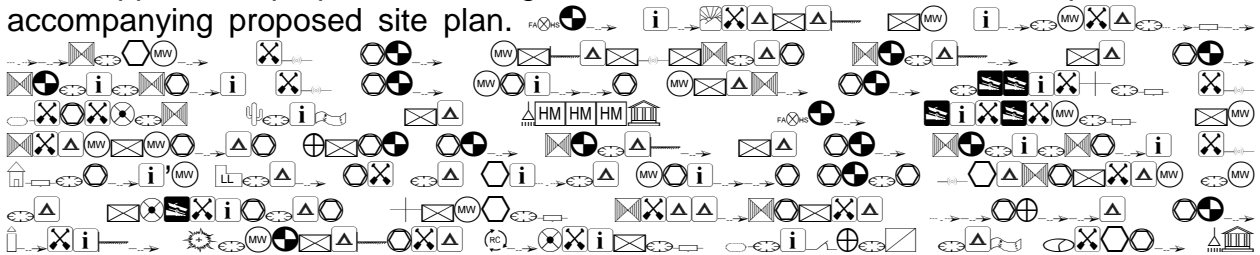
• Community:



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- The figure displays a 10x10 grid of 100 small diagrams. Each diagram is a unique combination of geometric shapes (circles, squares, triangles, hexagons, octagons, pentagons) and symbols (letters like 'i', 'C', 'H', 'M', 'V', 'X', 'A', 'B', 'D', 'E', 'F', 'G', 'I', 'J', 'K', 'L', 'N', 'O', 'P', 'Q', 'R', 'S', 'T', 'U', 'V', 'W', 'Y', 'Z', and mathematical symbols like '+', '-', '=', '<', '>'). The symbols are often placed inside or next to the shapes, creating a complex visual vocabulary.

Staff supports the proposed rezoning and Master Plan amendment with a proffer to the accompanying proposed site plan.



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Site Description:

The rectangular shaped site consists of three parcels totaling 22,463 sq. ft with frontage on Slater's Lane. The site currently contains a one to two level printing (Nordic Press) building and surface parking lot on the southern and western portion of the site. The site is essentially flat and almost entirely covered with impervious surfaces. The property is zoned CSL/Commercial Service Low. The site is surrounded by a variety of two to four-story buildings that consist of a mix of residential (multi-family and townhouses), office, and retail uses.



The uses to the north include an office building, a future 1.5 acre public park and the 15,000 sq.ft. Potomac Plaza retail center that is nearing completion. The blocks to the south and east consist of well established residential townhouses and apartments that range in height from 20 ft. to 30 ft. The adjoining property to the west is the four-story (50 ft.) tall Old Town Crescent condominium building. Additional townhomes are under construction at the intersection of Slater's Lane and Portner Road.



Because a portion of the site is located within 500 feet of the Parkway, demolition of the 1950s 16,500 sq.ft. warehouse will require subsequent review and approval by the Board of Architectural Review. Consistent with the City's policy on a fundamental land-use question such as a rezoning, the application is reviewed by the Planning Commission and City Council prior to review by the Board of Architectural Review as discussed in more detail below.



The Proposal:

The applicant is requesting approval of a rezoning, Master Plan amendment and a site plan to construct a 28-unit residential condominium building that will consist of 9 one-bedroom units

and 19 two-bedroom units. The units will range in size from 784 sq.ft. to 1,317sq.ft. A two-level below grade parking garage will provide a total of 47 parking spaces and will incorporate the required residential parking (45 spaces). In addition, the applicant is providing 7 (15%) visitor parking spaces that will be provided at grade adjacent to the alley. Controlled access will be provided for the underground garage.

A 12-15 ft. wide public alley exists on the southern portion of the site. The applicant is proposing to widen the alley to 22 ft. through the provision of public access easements. The construction of the alley will result in the removal of two trees. The construction of a 22.ft wide alley on the Nordic Press site will provide a continuous 22 ft. wide alley from Portner Road to the eastern portion of the Nordic Press site, which also serves the townhouses on Bernard Street. As part of the approval of the adjoining Old Town Crescent building, the City anticipated that the Nordic Press building would redevelop in the future and required that the Old Town Crescent site provide a public access easement for the alley to enable future alley access for the Nordic Press site.

The primary entrance for the building will be on Slater's Lane with a secondary entrance at the rear of the building near the visitor parking. All of the building faces are articulated in a series of vertical bays, with portions of the buildings setback providing visual interest and additional areas for landscaping. The building is located on the western portion of the site, allowing the eastern portion of the site to be a consolidated open space courtyard, which serves as part of the required 40% ground-level open space. The location of the eastern open space area will visually connect to the future public park on the north side of Slater's Lane. The open space also serves as a buffer between the proposed condominiums and the adjoining Mason Hall parking lot.

C. Evolution of the Plan:

The project has evolved significantly since the initial proposal by the applicant. Most notably, the applicant has worked with staff and the community to provide an increased setback along Slater's Lane allowing for significant pedestrian improvement such as wide brick sidewalks, pedestrian scale street lights and street trees within a planting strip. The site plan was revised to add consolidated public open space on the eastern portion of the site. Additionally, the applicant has worked to revise the proposed building, creating a slightly taller and more prominent tower element on the northeast corner of the building. The applicant has worked with the City to provide a considerable setback for the townhouses on Bernard Street which is 90ft. or 35 ft. more than the adjoining building. The tower will be visible from the George Washington Parkway and will establish a "gateway" to the residential neighborhood of Slater's Lane, Portner Road, and Powhatan Street.

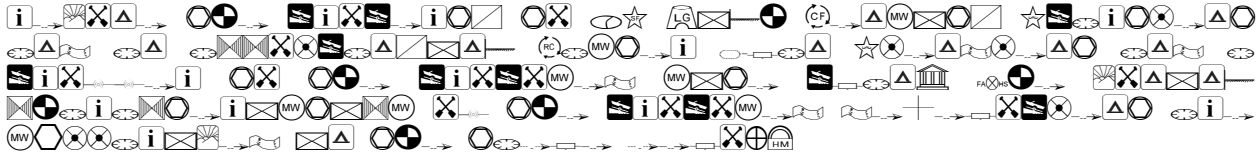
ZONING:



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<u>Proposed</u>	<u>CSL existing</u>	<u>RC proposed</u>	
FAR	.75	1.25	
1.25			
Lot Area	N/A	800sq.ft./unit	
802 sq. ft./unit			
Setbacks			
front yard	N/A	N/A	
9.5 ft			
side yard	N/A	1:3/16 ft. min.	
13.75 ft. (modification request)			
rear yard	N/A	1:1/25' min.	30
ft. (modification request)			
Building Area	16,847 sq.ft.	28,008	
			27,957 sq. ft.
Open Space	N/A	40% 40.7%	
Height	50 feet	50 feet	

V. STAFF ANALYSIS

The proposed redevelopment of this commercial/warehouse site presents an opportunity to provide a use that will be more compatible with the adjoining primarily residential neighborhoods and be more consistent with the more mixed-use pedestrian-oriented environment for this visually prominent site adjacent to the George Washington Memorial Parkway. The current 1950s commercial-light industrial use on the site is a remnant of the industrial uses once typical of this area and oriented to vehicles rather than pedestrians.

Redevelopment of this site requires a balance between mass, scale, height and site design. The location is on a prominent street and will be highly visible. The proposed residential use and scale are consistent with the adjacent uses on Slater's Lane. The improved streetscape, landscaping and useable consolidated public open space-courtyard are amenities that will help to reinforce the residential character of the street.

In addition to working with the applicant and community on the building and the site plan, staff has added conditions to ensure that the overall design and materials of the building, open space and streetscape improvements are of the highest quality, responding to the proximity to the George Washington Memorial Parkway and the building's visually prominent location on Slater's Lane.

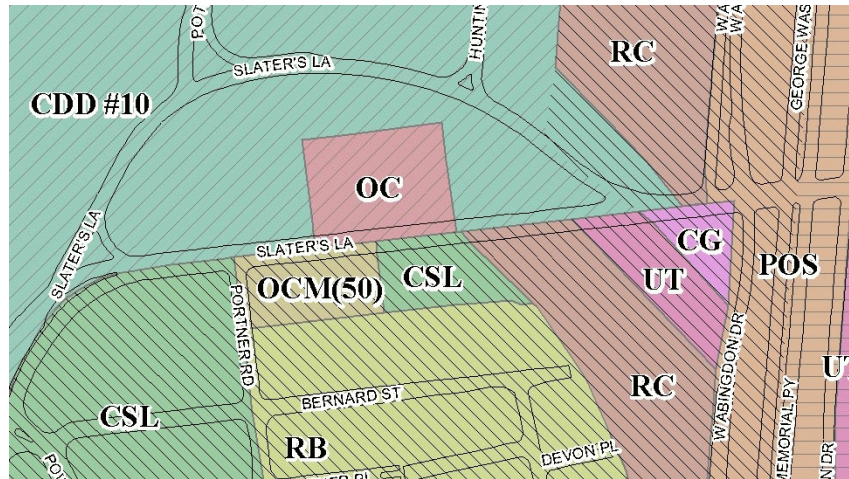
REZONING- MASTER PLAN AMENDMENT:

The applicant is requesting approval of an amendment to the North East Small Area Plan chapter of the Master Plan to change the zoning designation of the subject property from CSL Commercial Service Low to RC High Density Residential with a proffer to the proposed development plan for the site. The applicant is requesting an increase in FAR from .75 to 1.25 more than the current zoning.

The Master Plan is the primary guide for the future development of the City. Since its original adoption in 1992, the plan has been updated and periodically amended to more clearly reflect the intended use of a particular area. The Plan may be amended either as part of a long-term planning process for a designated area or as a result of an individual request for a specific change.

Recently, it has been the practice of the City that rezonings are generally not supported outside of the approved or on-going long-range planning studies. While this has been the general practice, the City has approved several rezonings in the past couple years such as Samuel Madden(Chatham Square), Beasley Square and Quaker Ridge. In these instances, staff, the Planning Commission, and City Council have evaluated the rezonings based on compatibility of the use, mass and scale with the adjoining neighborhood and change in character of the area.

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The table below provides a comparison of the existing CSL zone and the proposed RC zone and the adjoining OCM zone of the adjoining Old Town Crescent condominium building.